Herefordshire Council

HEREFORD CITY MASTER PLAN

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

27 JANUARY 2023



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TRANSFORMING HEREFORD

A SAFER, CLEANER, GREENER FUTURE FOR ALL

A. OVERALL PROPOSALS

1. What is your vision for the future of Hereford?

We want to make Hereford an even better city – a greener, healthier, and safer place for all.

We want to ensure the city is easier to get to and around, whether you're travelling on foot, by bike, by car, bus, or train. Better choice in how we move should reduce short-trip car journeys, reducing congestion.

As the city is transformed for the future, we want to enhance the historic centre, maximise green space, explore the potential for new affordable, high-quality city centre homes, reduce carbon emissions and adapt the city for a changing climate.

A starting point is to speak with residents, businesses, and stakeholders to find out about their experience of Hereford – what is working well, what could be improved – so we can shape the city's future together.

2. How do you propose to achieve this?

The masterplan will provide a blueprint to shape development in the city for a generation. It will inform the Council's work programme and is intended to support Hereford's emerging Local Plan.

Our aim is to provide an exciting, sustainable future and enhance the experience of the city for those who live, work in, and visit Hereford.

3. What are the timescales for the masterplan?

The Council and its project team of Council officers and consultants are working to the following timeline:

- Winter 2023 – feedback from engagement; masterplan development
- Spring 2023 – draft masterplan published
- Summer 2023 – consultation around draft masterplan

B. HEREFORD'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT

4. How do you propose to change Hereford's built environment?

Our focus is on the following main areas:

- There are currently more car parks in Hereford than demand requires. Providing more and better options for how people choose to move to, from and around the city may further reduce demand in the future. As part of the emerging masterplan, the Council is therefore exploring the potential for future re-purposing of some of the car parks it owns in Hereford, to provide high quality public spaces and sensitively designed new homes for the city in the future.
- Protecting and enhancing Hereford's heritage and distinctive character will underpin our work. The emerging masterplan will seek to improve connections between the city's heritage assets, revealing the city's defences and archaeology and repairing and re-using existing historic buildings.
- We will be mindful through these changes of the importance of supporting local businesses, particularly independent businesses, the cultural sector and the city's burgeoning high-tech economy.

5. How many new homes will you create and where will these be located?

It is too early to say at this stage. Analysis is being undertaken to identify possible locations for future housing development and the number of new homes these locations could support so they can be considered in a future Local Plan process. The draft masterplan will identify potential sites and will be followed by extensive consultation to understand what people think.

It is worth noting that Herefordshire Council is already actively identifying opportunities to create new high-quality homes in the city. For example, the Council agreed in 2022 to purchase land in Widemarsh ward with a view to developing the first new residential scheme under the Herefordshire Future Homes Standard.

6. If more people are going to live in Hereford, how will you adapt the city's infrastructure, such as schools, health facilities, shopping, to support this?

The Council will commission or require developers to undertake thorough assessments during the planning process to ensure that sufficient local community infrastructure is in place to support any new development, including health, school, and other local community facilities.

7. What are your proposals for car parks?

The Council has been looking for some time at the potential to repurpose some of the car parks it owns in Hereford, as there are currently more car parking spaces available than demand requires.

As part of this process the Council is exploring options that could include the delivery of much needed new, high-quality city centre homes that are affordable to local people, accommodation for students given the newly created New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE) and existing College of Art in the city, visitor accommodation, as well as new public green spaces for those who live, work in, and visit Hereford to enjoy.

Car parks will continue to be required in a variety of different locations to cater for people arriving in Hereford from different directions. The Council will continue to provide sufficient parking to ensure the city centre remains accessible and convenient to those who visit by car alongside all other modes of transport.

8. Which car parks will be affected and when?

Work to support the creation of a draft masterplan includes reviewing the future potential for all the car parks and developing a strategy which considers the implications of retention, closure and redevelopment of specific car parks across the city. This work is ongoing, and it is too early to identify specific sites.

The masterplan will make recommendations regarding potential opportunity sites, the nature of possible future uses and potential timings for redevelopment – as well as identifying those car parks we propose to retain.

Some sites for development won't come as a surprise. The redevelopment of at least part of the Merton Meadow car park has been earmarked for some time and we are continuing to explore potential opportunities here alongside other sites.

C. PUBLIC REALM

9. How will the masterplan enhance the public realm in and around the city?

The masterplan will improve the public realm in Hereford in several ways.

Firstly, it will identify key walking and cycling routes and opportunities to enhance the experience of those who live, work in or visit Hereford and its surrounding villages and market towns, making these routes safer, more convenient, comfortable, welcoming and attractive. The routes will connect the key destinations and points of arrival and support the wider regeneration objectives of the masterplan.

In addition, the masterplan will identify opportunities to enhance existing public spaces and create new spaces to ensure a rich and diverse range of streets, squares, parks and gardens. The design of these spaces will enhance the character and appearance of the city – improving the quality and coherence of paving and furniture and the setting of key existing buildings and spaces within Hereford.

D. TRANSPORT: WALKING, WHEELING AND CYCLING

10. What are your proposals for active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling)?

The Council would like to enable residents, businesses, and visitors to get around Hereford easily, quickly, and cheaply. We want to make it easier for children to get around independently. We want to plan and deliver infrastructure for the right kinds of traffic. This means designing for the traffic we want to see – more people walking in the city centre and to and from local shops. More families cycling to school and employees to their places of work.

There is demand for walking and cycling. We know from listening to those who live, work in, or visit Hereford that more people locally would like to walk or cycle but are put off by the current state of the city's roads. The amount of car traffic means many people do not currently feel safe or comfortable cycling on the streets we live on, nor in our neighbourhoods and on main roads.

The Council wants to put infrastructure in place to make our streets more people friendly. Hereford is a small, compact city that is very suited for getting around by walking, cycling, or wheeling (using a wheelchair or another mobility aid) – quickly, cheaply and healthily. The masterplan will identify proposals for how to achieve this.

11. How will these impact on existing road capacity?

Enabling more people to choose walking, wheeling and cycling for some local journeys will mean that there is space on the roads for people who need to use cars and vans to get about. We will explore potential impacts of our proposals as part of our planning.

12. How will you make cycling to, from and around the city feel safer?

We want to make Hereford's streets, roads and neighbourhoods feel safe and inviting for those who live, work in, or visit the city and surrounding areas to enable people to walk, wheel and cycle more. In the masterplan we are looking at what we can change on the city's roads and infrastructure to make this happen.

13. Is increasing cycling realistic given the rural nature of Herefordshire and changeable weather?

Yes. It is not the county's geography or weather that can put people off cycling, it is that conditions on our roads are not currently favourable to cycling. In the UK in the early 1950's people collectively cycled 14.2 billion miles every year , more than four times the 3.45 billion miles cycled in 2019. We believe our residents want choice in how they travel around locally and that if we provide this choice then more people will walk, wheel and cycle to get around.

This is not just a Herefordshire matter, the Government's ambition is that across the UK by 2030, over half of journeys in urban areas will be walked, wheeled, or cycled. And the Government is putting in place future funding for local authorities to meet this ambition. The emerging city masterplan will help us to be on the front foot to secure this funding, by planning ambitious and coherent projects that help our residents and businesses. The masterplan will propose changes that will give us all greater choice in how we travel and improve our neighbourhoods and local areas.

14. How will you enable children and their parents, carers, and guardians to choose active travel and public transport?

We want to make our streets, roads and neighbourhoods feel safe and inviting for our residents, their families, and visitors to walk, wheel and cycle more. In the masterplan, we are looking at what we can change on our city's roads and infrastructure to make this happen.

E. TRANSPORT: RAIL, BUS AND ROAD

15. What are your proposals for buses?

We would like a diverse bus service which serves the wide-ranging needs of the people in our city and our towns and villages. We are planning changes to deliver city-wide bus services and services which reach our more rural areas to connect people to where they want to go.

Our aim over time is to provide a carbon-free, simple to use bus network that is:

- Available – operates when people wish to use the network, capacity should be available for known and future levels of use. The network should be publicised thoroughly.
- Accessible – the network should be within easy reach of everyone with no barriers to joining and leaving the network. The network should be coordinated and provide seamless links to other forms of public transport.
- Affordable – journeys should be value for money and be at less cost than a comparable car journey.
- Acceptable – the bus journey should be of high quality in terms of vehicles, infrastructure, staffing, and reliability, so that users feel confident to use the services. Journey times should match those by private car wherever possible.

To achieve this, we will adopt best practice in working with the public and private sectors. We will review the governance of bus service to see if there is a better way of developing the network. We will need Government or local funding to make this happen over the coming years.

16. What are your proposals to improve rail services serving Hereford?

Our priority first and foremost is to deliver a public transport interchange which matches our ambition.

Whilst the rail station building in Hereford is something to be proud of, we would like to better connect rail services together with local buses. Alongside this we would like to enable much better walking connections to the city centre so that those living, working in or visiting Hereford feel a strong sense of place when arriving by train.

17. What are your proposals for a Transport Hub?

The Hereford Transport Hub will provide an integrated modern public transport interchange in the forecourt area of Hereford Railway Station. It will enable passengers to switch easily between different modes of transport – rail, bus, cycle and taxi. The public realm around the station will also be improved, with better walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure making it easier for people to travel between the station and the historic heart of Hereford. The Council will shortly commission a design team to undertake detailed design work and a contractor to take forward the physical works subject to all the required approvals being in place.

18. Is the Transport Hub part of the city masterplan, or separate?

The Transport Hub is being taken forward independently of the city masterplan, however, by providing greater choice in how people move into and around the city, improving public space and supporting Hereford's economy, the Transport Hub is completely consistent with the vision the masterplan will set out.

19. Where is the funding for the Transport Hub coming from and what are the timescales for its delivery?

Herefordshire Council has been successful in its bid for funding for a new integrated Transport Hub, which will link cycling, walking, bus and rail transport in Hereford, as detailed here.

In terms of timescales, consultation is underway on the design of the Transport Hub. It is anticipated that the Transport Hub will be fully completed in 2024.

20. What are your proposals for an Eastern River Crossing?

The case for an additional river crossing in Hereford and the need to tackle traffic levels in the city are well evidenced. The Council agreed in 2021 to pursue an Eastern route linking the Rotherwas Enterprise Zone and the A438, allowing residents and businesses in the eastern part of the city to access the areas south of the city without having to go through the city centre and use Victoria Bridge. The Eastern River Crossing will be a key link not just for motor vehicles but for improved public transport and active travel, leading to improved health and wellbeing for residents.

21. Is the Eastern River Crossing part of the city masterplan, or separate?

The consideration of an Eastern River Crossing is being taken forward independently of the city masterplan – however, it is an important part of the movement strategy supporting the city masterplan. An additional river crossing is key to providing resilience for the transport network within the city and helping people move around the city. By reducing traffic on the A49, freed up road space and junction capacity will create the conditions for sustainable travel improvements along the A49 corridor to better link the east and west of the city. By supporting carbon reduction from traffic and improving the conditions for economic growth, the Eastern River Crossing is completely consistent with the vision the masterplan will set out.

22. Where is the funding for the Eastern River Crossing coming from and what are the timescales for its delivery?

The initial project feasibility work has been completed and the strategic outline business case is now being progressed. No decision has yet been made on the funding route for the construction of the crossing. Several options have been identified and will be further considered as part of the project planning. As a large infrastructure project, development has to follow Department for Transport guidance and typically projects of this scale and complexity can take between 8 and 10 years to complete.

F. NATURE, CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY

23. How will the masterplan address the climate and ecological emergency?

The climate and ecological emergencies are key drivers in the development of the city masterplan. The masterplan will take a holistic approach in addressing these complex issues and wherever possible will deliver nature-based solutions to adapt the city and nearby villages and market towns to the already changing climate.

Improving choice in how people get into and around Hereford will lead to a reduced reliance on private motor vehicles, creating a cleaner and greener city.

Repurposing some existing car parks will release space for potential environmental uses, such as natural flood management, tree planting and new green space for people and wildlife, whilst also contributing towards the supply of new high quality, energy-efficient and affordable homes.

24. What about biodiversity?

Alongside improving choice in how people move into and around Hereford, the movement of wildlife is a key consideration for the masterplan. Both the River Wye and River Lugg corridors are included in the scope of the masterplan, which will explore ways to improve biodiversity in these areas. The masterplan will investigate how wildlife corridors that travel through the city can be improved, especially watercourses such as the Yazor, Widemarsh, Eign, Newton, Withy and Red Brooks. Creating new and improving existing green spaces in the city will be explored. The masterplan will also seek to create 'stepping-stones' of pollinator and wildlife habitat across the city centre and into surrounding neighbourhoods through urban greening, tree planting, the creation of biodiverse rain gardens and wild verges.

G. FINANCE

25. How much money is available and which budgets is this coming from?

The masterplan is setting a long-term vision for what the city will look like by 2050, it will not be delivered immediately. The Council recognises the funding realities that the public sector faces at this current time but believes that this should not temper our ambition or vision for the city. The availability or otherwise of funding will determine the speed of delivery of our vision not the vision itself.

Having a bold vision for the city will enable us to be in a better position to attract funding from a variety of sources such as our own revenue and capital resources, central government bidding rounds, private sector developers and joint ventures or partnerships.

The masterplan will set out a long-term programme of potential projects. The Council will need to be agile and responsive to opportunities as they arise to deliver projects, so the masterplan and supporting business case will be flexible enough to allow this.

26. What funding are you seeking from Government or partners?

The landscape of central Government funding is continually changing so any identified opportunities will be flexible to respond to available funding at specific points in the future. The purpose of the current work is to establish whether and what level of public funding may be required to subsidise projects and to provide the strategic case to support potential future bids for funding. This analysis is ongoing.